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**Written Testimonial for House Bill 58**

Chairman Duffey, ranking member Sweeney and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, my name is Haithi Donahue and I would like to offer support for HB 58. At the age of 3, my son Jacob was diagnosed with Autism. In preschool his writing was always a struggle. After looking at early handwriting samples, I worried that he would never be able to write properly. Were it not for the hard work of teachers and therapists who worked on everything from pencil grasp to stroke placement, he would probably struggle a lot more with his handwriting now.

When I enrolled him in St. Brendan School, I did it for the support and education that he would be able to get there. As an unintended bonus, cursive is still a requirement in the curriculum there. When it was introduced to him in the 2nd grade, he was adamant about formation, constantly erasing and rewriting his work to make it better, determined to do it right. Cursive writing was becoming a passion for him, something no amount of therapy or teaching could give. In 4th grade, Jacob’s teacher and occupational therapist entered his writing sample to Zaner-Bloser for their annual writing competition. When he won the Nicholas Maxim Award for children with disabilities, it gave him a tremendous boost in self-confidence and his love for writing was rewarded.

Through the events of Jacob’s recognition, I became aware of the numerous benefits everyone gets from writing in cursive. Cursive handwriting improves brain development in the areas of language, thinking and working memory. As a result of his autism, Jacob has been described as a sensory seeking child needing a lot of tactile input. Writing in cursive helps him to receive information in a tactile way. Jacob still struggles with expressive language, but is getting better every day and I know cursive writing is helping lay inroads into that part of his brain. Cursive writing is also said to access similar areas of the brain as music does. Schools that can’t afford to keep music programs can look to a more affordable offering to stimulate our children’s minds not only in school, but also in life.

Maybe teaching cursive isn’t a skill that shows up on tests. Maybe writing in cursive is equivalent to the horse drawn carriage in this age of computers. But we need to ask ourselves what we really lose, what we have already lost, by taking cursive out of our education. Don’t we still teach math facts and functions by hand before we let our children use calculators? Why don’t we see writing the same way? Will future generations be unable to read historical documents simply because they can’t read cursive? These are just some of the questions we need to ask ourselves and rise to the challenge of answering them. I ask that all the children of Ohio are given the same opportunity given to my son so that they too might have the chance to tap into their highest potential.